VILA RECÔNCAVO

[Town Life]

is very rough, though strong. Most of the men complain about it, for it cuts their hands when they are fishing and the action of salt water on the cuts inflames their hands badly. 227

There are between seventy-five and one hundred canoes in Vila Recôncavo, of all sizes, from 16 to about 50 feet long. They come from the southern part of the state, and cost between Cr$1.000,00 and Cr$6.000,00 apiece, depending on their size. They are made of vinhatico preto, a large tree from which an entire canoe can be hollowed out. As the canoes grow older, they are strengthened inside by the addition of ribs. The center support (pé do banco) has a hole in it through which a mast can be stepped for sailing. The fishermen use a variety of sails, but usually a simple square sail called traquête. Four flour sacks sewn together make a passable square sail. The canoes last a long time and are handed down from generation to generation. A hundred years is not an uncommon age for such a craft. 501 [313] [428]

The majority of fishermen cannot swim well and have a great respect for the water on two counts: the water is deep, which to them implies danger, and it is said to hide large, man-eating fish. There are stories of three men who have disappeared in the last few years, snatched away by fish. One was a baixador, and the other two fell overboard. Falling is not uncommon, for often a man steps on a small fish on the bottom of the canoe or simply slips on the wet wood, loses his balance, and goes overboard, as the canoes are narrow-beamed and unstable. In their canoes they are fearless, and will go anywhere in any weather. Severe storms which arise suddenly are ridden out in the canoe, which generally lies at anchor while the men lie under cover of the sail, peering out occasionally to see if the weather is clearing. Many of them, however, become violently ill on a larger boat during a storm. 501 226 [481] [825] [164]

Winter is the most productive season for fishing, although the most uncomfortable. There are many storms, and the rains are more or less constant. But the fishermen say that the mixture of salt water with the fresh water from small rivers emptying into the bay seems to produce many more fish than in the summer months. The fishermen dress only in a pair of shorts and a straw hat when fishing, and remain in the cold rain for hours on end. Colds are common among them, as is rheumatism among the older men. 226 [221] [132] [291] [164]

There is always a market for fish. There is a discussion currently going on in Vila Recôncavo, for some of the older 226 43

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252 they produce. The juice which is squeezed out is saved, and starch is extracted from it to be used in pressing clothes. The nonpoisonous variety of manioc (aipim) is used to a much smaller extent. Usually the tuber is boiled in water and then eaten as though it were a potato, for it does not need any processing to render it edible.

241 463 Ten of the twenty-four gardeners concentrate on manioc, while the others raise bananas. Most of them also grow their own household subsistence crops, scattered among the manioc and bananas, such as corn, beans, squash, and often a few shoots of excellent tobacco. Many of them also produce a quarter or half acre of a heavy type of sugar cane (cana de chupar) which is stripped of its bark, cut into short pieces, and masticated, the pulp being spit out after the person has sucked out the juice. Almost everyone indulges in this, and the sugar which is absorbed is undoubtedly a great source of energy. The plots (roças) are fenced and protected by an ox skull stuck on one of the fence posts to keep out the evil eye.

[146] [825] [789]

There are many gardeners to the west of the town who rent their small plots from either the Engenho da Vila or the federal school. This area has not produced sugar cane for many years, for it lacks the surface covering of massapê. These gardeners are often called matutos ("hicks"), real backwoodsmen who get along on subsistence agriculture and seldom leave their rural neighborhood. They are as far removed from contact with modern civilization as anyone could be while living in the Recôncavo. They live in well-hidden, small houses of mud and thatch, and one can ride through this section without seeing anyone.

241 463 554 [427]

443 463 The peddlers (ambulantes) listed in Group 3 have their houses in Vila Recôncavo but go from town to town selling their wares. While they do some trading at the fairs they also cover a regular route independent of the fairs. Compadresco, the system of godparentship, is important to them, for the houses of such relations give them a base of operations in every town they visit. One of the three is a man who buys and sells jewelry, and the other two are women; one sells cloth for dresses and the other sweets (doces), peanuts, and dried shrimp. The latter is one of the famous street merchants (bahianas) of Salvador; she sits on a street corner before a portable table selling favorite Bahian snacks such as acarajé and abará. She goes to Salvador on the boat on Saturdays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, returning to Vila Recôncavo the

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4: Pierson Z-4, 5 (1935-1937) 1967
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but also against all skin ailments, including leprosy. Particularly approachable is the deity to whom a person is dedicated. "This bad cut on my foot," remarked a *mãe de santo* dedicated to Xangô, "would not heal. So I talked it over with Xangô. He agreed to heal it, and told me what to use. It's now getting well; it's much better already."

An individual troubled by continued ill-health, business difficulties, or even bad dreams may request of the fetish-cult priest the ritual of *lavagem das contas*, or "washing the beads." Divination is first resorted to in order to identify the *orixá* "responsible" for the difficulty. Then the beads sacred to this deity are immersed in water, a newly purchased basin being used for the purpose, and a handful of leaves also sacred to him are crushed and added. After a time, the beads are removed and washed with *sabão da costa* ("soap from the Coast"). Thus purified, they are given to the person suffering the ill fortune, who must subsequently keep them in a clay vessel and from time to time wear them about his neck.

Considered one of the most effective methods of "removing" a disease or misfortune is the *troca da cabeça*, or "changing of heads," whose purpose is to transfer the disturbing influence from the afflicted person to another individual. The ritual varies. The afflicted one may have his head rubbed with a chicken or a pigeon, which, having thus acquired the evil influence, is then killed. Or an *ebó*, or *bozó*, as it is more commonly called, may be prepared,[31] and the affliction purposely transferred to another individual by leav-

[31] The *bozó* almost always includes a dead hen, popcorn, manioc meal with *azeite de dendê*, pieces of clothing from the one to be benefited, nickel or copper coins, certain African foods like *acassá*, *aberém*, and *acarajé*, and, if available, the African fruits, the *obí* and the *orobó*, of ritualistic significance.

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ing the *oozó* in a place where the intended victim is likely to step on it or otherwise touch it.[33] An animal may be "prepared with the *ebó*" so that whoever subsequently touches the animal will catch the illness or inherit the misfortune. If, however, one wishes to avoid transferring the evil to another person, he may do so and still rid himself of his affliction by leaving the *ebó* in a cemetery.

If a *filha de santo* (ceremonial dancer of the fetish cult) would avoid illness or other misfortune, it is considered highly important that she observe all the taboos, especially those attaching to food and drink. A pregnant woman must avoid vegetables and all meats other than chicken; she must not join a funeral procession, since the spirit of the deceased might enter her child; and she must avoid a rose touching her bare breast, for otherwise the child, it is believed, will be born with a birthmark.[33]

Charms may be of a specific nature like the *figa*[34] or the

[33] The affliction may, however, be transferred to someone toward whom no harm was originally intended if the individual placing the *ebó*, either ignorantly or with intention, fails to leave it in the designated place. The first person coming in physical contact with it will be affected. So widespread is this fear of the *ebó* that chauffeurs, even at the risk of an accident, will not run a wheel over one.

[33] Current folk medicines include: for syphilis, whale oil; for a toothache, pig or burro dung smoked in a clay pipe; for a cough, sweetened tea prepared by boiling a termite nest; for sore throat, tea made by boiling a live lizard whose body is then removed from the vessel and buried with its head toward the new moon. Native herbs are extensively employed, particularly by *curandeiros*, or they may be administered at the hands of anyone "instructed" by a "manifesting" deity, a common occurrence in those *candomblés* known as *de caboclo* (a portion of whose ritual is probably of native Indian origin) and in spiritualist centers like that in Alto do Bom Gosto, in Calcada, one of whose directors remarked, "So many *caboclos* 'manifest themselves' because they know so well how to heal with herbs."

[34] The *figa* is an image, usually made from wood, of a closed fist with the thumb inserted between the index and middle fingers.

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neys, etc.[37] Oracles are invoked by way of such magical intermediaries as the *obî* and the *orobô*, or the *opêlê-ifá* (a chain of thin disks), or they may be obtained directly from an *orixá* who speaks during the "possession" of a *filha* or a *pae de santo* by way of the mouth of the one "possessed."[38]

Contact between the living and the dead is believed not only to be possible but to occur regularly. Hence, the prac-

[37] The serious character of a transaction of this sort puts it in a different category from certain other magical acts, common to all classes, which have the character of a game, being similar, for example, to practices attaching to our festival of Halloween. Thus, one may take a glass, "bless" it three times, put in it the white of an egg, and, holding it over a fire, again thrice "bless" it; or partially fill a basin with water and permit the tallow from a lighted candle to drip into it; or stick a knife up to the hilt in a banana tree and leave it until morning. The patterns formed on the glass, the water, and the knife, respectively, are presumed to indicate the initials of one's future spouse. A similar image is presumed to appear in the dreams of one under whose pillow has been left a freshly husked ear of corn.

[38] Other magical practices of this sort are: the placing of crushed charcoal under a rock to expedite the recovery of a lost article, the burying of the third of a rosary to stop rain; also, it is commonly believed that a hummingbird inside the house, or the singing of an *adiyem-quenem*, announces the coming of guests; that the appearance of an owl, or of an *ouriço cacheiro*, foretells death; that a black butterfly is a sign of misfortune; that a katydid with dark eyes brings unpleasant news, while one with light eyes brings favorable news; that seeing the new moon for the first time between the branches of a tree or anywhere partially obscured is a sign of misfortune throughout the coming month; that the showing of money to the new moon when seen for the first time will assure no want of income for the next thirty days; that ill fortune will attend one who dwells in a house on the corner of a street, enters a house with the right foot, or opens an umbrella inside a house. Still other "signs" of misfortune are: the toad; the black cat (or the "ghost" of a cat); the *anum* perched in a tree near the house; the *jacupim*; the hummingbird, if black; the katydid, if it has a black mouth (if the katydid has a red mouth, happiness is in store for the observer). In the opinion of numerous people, mutton must not be eaten, since it is "the *lamb of God* who taketh away the sins of the world." Sheep are animals which Christians must not eat.

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*jacús*, found one, and shot at it. The *jacú* flew at him with its claws extended and severely scratched him. He shot at it again. It flew back and clawed at his eyes. Then he heard a voice, saying "You know you must not hunt on Fridays." It was the *caipora*. The man staggered home, and fell senseless in the door of his house. I knew this man well.

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The *biatáta* is said to be a woman who inhabits the sea, appearing above water only at night, gradually increasing in size until she assumes an enormous shape, and "casting a huge and frightening shadow."

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Fear of the toad, probably also a survival of Indian belief, is common.[39] If a toad happens to hop into the door of a house, the occupant will immediately grab a broom and sweep it out, repeating over and over, "Creio em Deus Padre."[40] If a malicious person paints a toad on the wall of a dwelling, its occupants will at once desert the place.

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The following account reveals in an intimate way the mental world of a considerable portion of the Bahian lower class. It was related by a young Negro woman in the form of a series of personal experiences and is presented here in as nearly as possible the exact phrasing in which it was originally given.

I was three years old. I was sitting with my mother when something hit me, and I fell over unconscious. She picked me up and took me to a doctor. He gave me medicine and said that it was congestion. Some thought it was the *ar do vento*.

I knew nothing of what was going on; it was as if I were dead. To

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[39] "Montoya says ('Manuscripto guarani da Bibliotheca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro sobre a primitiva catechese dos Indios das Missões,' *Annaes da Bibliotheca National*, Vol. VI) that among Indians observed by him, the entrance of a toad into a gathering of people was a sign of the approaching death of one of those present" (Gilberto Freyre, *Casa grande e senzala* [2d ed.; Rio, 1936], p. 99).

[40] "I believe in God, the Father."

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put many beads of O Senhor do Bomfim on him, and a *figa;* they covered him with ornaments.

[789] The *figa* is to free one from the evil eye. For example: I have a
[754] dress. You think it is pretty, and you want it very much; something then happens to it. Or a *sabiá*[10] sings beautifully. You are visiting its owner; you want it, you want it very badly. You leave, and it dies or something else happens to it because you cannot have it. This is the evil eye. One needs to "pray it away" with *Guiné, Arruda,* or *Vassourinha Doce.* An oxhorn in the garden will keep it away from plants.

[794] Then the man went around with hands folded, "taking the bless-
[776] ing" from everyone there. Seven children went out with lighted can-
[793] dles. Then he got up entirely well. Today he has a *casa de candomblé.* He is now very old. His *orixá* is Ogum de Gêge. The *pae de santo* who treated him is of Ogum de Mina.

159 My guardian angel [*anjo de guarda*] is Xangô. Ogum is a soldier,
776 Xangô is of the thunder and also of the lightning. He is Santa Barbara of the Irmandade. All the *orixás* are equal. But Oxalá directs everything. Nanan is his wife. In the Gêge language she is called Odé.

159 My sister, she died, burned up. She caught all on fire. He who
776 killed her is Oxóssi; it was he who killed her. My sister is buried in the
784 Quinta dos Lazaros.[11] She burned to death because she disobeyed him. He sent a message and she paid no attention to it. Her husband had a *saveiro.*[12] Every trip which he made she went along in the boat. She had no children. Everywhere he went, she went too. When, one time, the *orixá* "arrived" and told her that she should not travel on the water, she didn't take his words very seriously; she laughed the matter off, "gave it a *muxóxó.*" But about a week afterward, she went with her husband in a *saveiro* across the Bay to Bahia. Between Itaparica and Salinas the *saveiro* caught afire. It had powder on it and the powder exploded. Parts of the *saveiro* were ripped off and hurled into the water. She was surrounded by fire. When they finally reached her, she was badly burned. They brought her to the Santa Isabel Hospital,

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[10] A Brazilian bird which can be trained to sing tunes.

[11] A Bahian cemetery.

[501] [12] A sturdy sailboat used on Todos os Santos Bay and its contributory rivers to transport light articles of commerce.